The $10,000,000 Heiress Who Runs Herself

Independent Miss DeLamar and Just Why Her Brand New Opera Box Among New York's Fashionables Has Caused So Much Comment

A Beautiful Vista of "Pembroke," Miss DeLamar's Long Island Palace That Holds the Unique Swimming Pool and Motion Picture Temple.

Photos Bradley & Keller

Miss DeLamar (Under the Parasol) and a Friend at Palm Beach.

And Here Is Miss DeLamar Running Herself on a Bicycle.

MISS ALICE DE LAMAR, daughter of the late Captain Joseph Raphael DeLamar, is probably the most interesting heiress in America. Where other girls in her position would have lolled back and let themselves be run by advisors, guardians and so on, Miss DeLamar has run herself with increasing ability and success since the early age of three.

At that time—just twenty-three years ago—papa and mamma DeLamar had an unfortunate disagreement which resulted in the courts divorcing them and handing little Alice over to her father. But papa DeLamar was a very busy man and his mamma-less daughter was faced with the usual prospect of being run by nurses, governesses, teachers and so forth. Before long she rebelled.

Papa DeLamar saw in the baby the same independence and revolt at restraint that had made him run away from his own home when only eight and gave orders that Miss Alice was to have her own way in everything—everything, of course, not harmful to her.

From that time on old Captain DeLamar's daughter ran herself. It is that unusual fact and how she did it that makes her America's most interesting heiress.

When it was announced, not so long ago, that Miss DeLamar had taken a box at the Metropolitan Opera House for the season a buzz of interested comment went up both from the socially elect and those ambitious of election. There was good reason for the buzz. The purchase of that opera box was a declaration of victory in a hard fought and hard won battle by Miss DeLamar. It was, in fact, the biggest triumph of her whole self-run career.

Everyone understands, of course, that entrance to the "Diamond Horseshoe," as the row of boxes at the Metropolitan is known because of the glitter that comes from there on opera nights, implies acquaintanceship with and acceptance by the other boxholders. And as these boxholders include the most exclusive families of New York, possession of a box implies the right to bow and shake hands and gossip with the Vanderbilts, the Astors and so on; a privilege than which, to some people, there is nothing more desirable in the world.

But why shouldn't Miss DeLamar have quietly slipped into her box without any comment? Isn't she very rich? Yes, indeed. When the old Captain died he left her $10,000,000 in currency and securities and valuable real estate, among which is a fairyland place and palace down on Long Island. Oh, yes, she is rich enough.

Hasn't she education, tact, culture? Indeed, yes—all these. Well, is there anything about her appearance that would—well, sort of make it unpleasant to have her around? Indeed, no, again! Miss DeLamar is remarkably easy to look at and always perfectly and beautifully groomed.

Family?

Ah, that was just the trouble. Even an heiress who runs herself can't run the stork that brought her ancestors. And old Captain DeLamar, despite his riches, never had the least claim to social recognition. He ran away from his Holland home when a boy and had started life as a sailor. Then he became a deep sea diver. After that he had gone to Africa as a trader and guide. Finally he had come to America, become interested in silver and copper mines and piled up a fortune of from $30,000,000 to $50,000,000. Odd moments of his adventurous career he had used to educate himself.

But rich as he was, forceful and interesting, the New York financiers with whom he associated had never dreamed of helping him socially. Nor did his marriage do anything to help him along in any ambitions of this kind he may have had.

When he was over fifty—this was back in 1892—he saw at Narragansett a vision of loveliness, a girl of eighteen, Titian-haired, with a figure as beautiful as her face, and that was saying something. She was Nellie Sands, daughter of an obscure New York druggist, but with an ambitious mother who fully realized the unusual allure of her child and who spent her vacations at the Pier, hoping, perhaps, that some marriageable eligible of the fashionable society that made the Pier its headquarters would notice it, too.

Old Captain DeLamar noticed it. And soon the former deep-sea diver, who was even then more than half way over the sea of life, and the druggist's beautiful daughter just embarking on it, were married.

Captain DeLamar showered gifts upon his bride, had her picture painted by a dozen of the greatest artists; gave her everything he thought her heart could desire or her lightest whim dictate. That is, all except one thing—and that he couldn't give her. It was a place in the fashionable society of New York? And it was that she wanted more than anything else!

They tried New York—without success. They tried Paris, but with no greater success. And there little Alice was born. There, too, the Captain, who was insanely jealous of his wife, secured his divorce and took little Alice back home to America. The former Mrs. DeLamar remained in France—and there for a time we will leave her.

But after that first revolt, which had shown him so clearly how truly his daughter, little Alice, was, the disillusioned, disillusioned, disappointed old Captain found a new interest in life. He watched the little girl closely, fostering her independence, developing skilfully her judgment and unobtrusively guiding her over the hard places. At five she was more mistress of her father's home than many a rich man's wife is of hers. And the servants and all those who visited there were never allowed by DeLamar to forget it.

When she was in her teens it bothered her somewhat that girls she liked in the exclusive school which she attended did not invite her to their homes. They were very nice to her in the class rooms, but they did not take her with them on vacations as they did others, or ask her to their parties. She could not understand and it made her unhappy.

Old Captain DeLamar's face would grow grim as she told him her troubles.

After a while he explained the matter to her. After that she wasn't unhappy about it.

"Once I know what the facts of a problem are I can go ahead with it," Miss DeLamar once told a friend. "It's only when I don't know what makes the problem that it worries me."

The social problem, once explained to her, became simply something to solve if worth solving, or if not, to leave alone. She decided to solve it.

'When the time comes, I'll make them come to me—if I want to," she said.

And just about then old Captain DeLamar died, leaving her the unrestricted use of that enormous fortune.

There were two perfectly obvious things she might do—things that other girls have done. She might have engaged a social chaperon, a clever woman of fine family but impecunious, to take her over and practically force her on society, or she might arrange to marry the son of some poverty-stricken family of assured position, who would be more than willing to marry any attractive girl with so much money.

But Miss Alice was too used to running herself to allow either a chaperon or a husband to run her—even into society.

She hired a companion, a woman who would be with her constantly. She could not afford to be entirely alone and be classed as "unconventional." After this Miss Alice decided to remove herself. For months at a time she hid herself somewhere in the West. Naturally, a good-looking girl with such a fortune couldn't drop out of sight without it being noticed. Gradually fashionable society began to have its curiosity aroused. Several of its impecunious but highly placed young gentlemen and others not so old ran across the heiress and laid siege to her heart. Any of them could have given her the position she wanted—but she would have none of them.

Her mother's ambitions were known; her father's efforts to put her in the place he desired for her were no secret. What did this girl mean, then, by holding off men whose families belonged to the inner social order, even though their fortunes were nil. Surely such a strange heiress was worthy of study!

Her Mother, the Former Mrs. DeLamar, Whom the Heiress Will Now Also Try to Run in Addition to Running Herself.

And this was the very effect, it may be, the independent Miss DeLamar had been working for.

She came East. The war broke out. She went in seriously for war work. After helping in the Red Cross she finally joined the Motor Corps, and, equipping her own motor ambulance, did yeoman's service in transporting wounded soldiers and exceptionally healthy officers around New York. She ran her own ambulance. Bare were down in those days and she came into intimate contact with women leaders of society. They liked her for her earnestness and cool common sense. But still Miss DeLamar pressed no claims for social recognition. Society was piqued.

After the war she opened "Pembroke," the wonderful Long Island estate. If society wanted to come there, it could—if it didn't, it could stay away. That was the attitude she took, and as a result society was even more piqued.

Things she was doing at "Pembroke" began to be talked about and aroused more curiosity. This very unusual heiress hadn't liked to go to baths where she would have to meet people she didn't care to. Therefore she had built in at "Pembroke" a marvellous swimming pool, with all the luxurious adjuncts of one of the old Roman baths. There she could swim by herself or with people she herself could accept.

She adored the "movies"—but she didn't want to go to them at theatres where she would have to rub elbows with any or every one. Besides, if she did she would have to see some films she didn't like. Therefore she built her own motion picture house, a veritable little gem of a marble palace designed and decorated by the foremost artists in America. At this private movie palace she, and those she invited, could look at the finest films picked out by herself.

And shortly down went the bars. Society flocked to "Pembroke" to see these and other wonders of the strange heiress who ran herself.

They came to her instead of her having to go to them, even as she had promised!

Then came the buying of the Metropolitan Opera box—the symbol of the victory.

But now another problem, and perhaps her greatest, faces her. That is her mother—still ambitious and still unrecognized. Five years after her divorce from the old captain the druggist's daughter married James Hatmaker, the confidential secretary of the late Cornelius Vanderbilt. From a social point of view this was an unwise step, for Mr. Hatmaker could not help her in her social career. His position with the Vanderbilts by no means meant that they could or would assist him that way. And they didn't. The Hatmakers had one child. They named her Consuelo, after the Duchess of Marlborough. But this didn't help, either.

There is no doubt that when her father was alive Miss DeLamar sided with him. She ignored her mother completely after his death. But six months ago she left hurriedly for Europe. The reason came out later. Mrs. Hatmaker, it developed, had cabled her daughter that she was about to divorce Mr. Hatmaker and wanted to talk things over with her.

So Miss DeLamar, taking only one of her closest friends with her, went to Paris, waited until the divorce was granted, and then sailed back with her mother and pretty young step-sister close behind her.

"If I can run myself," she said, in effect to important friends who advised her against this step, "I can run mother and sister."

But will she? When that box in the "Diamond Horseshoe" holds the former Mrs. DeLamar will those whose recognition she has coveted so long turn approving, friendly eyes on her, or only zero stares through the glacial lorgnette? Miss DeLamar has made them forget—or forgive—her being the daughter of a diver and granddaughter of a druggist. Can she force the same forgetfulness, or forgiveness, for her mother?